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THE  
CASE OF  
GREAT BRITAIN  
AND  
AMERICA.

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THE  
CASE OF  
GREAT BRITAIN  
AND  
AMERICA,  
ADDRESSED TO THE KING,  
AND BOTH  
HOUSES of PARLIAMENT.

The Colonies of every popular, mixed, and free Government, preserving their Duty, have a Right to be free.

*Mr. CANNING's Letter to the E. of HILLSBOROUGH.*

—— Dare do all that may become Men,  
Who dare do more, are none. ——

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L O N D O N :

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DE HONDT,  
in the Strand. MDCC LXIX.

Page 11, Line 3, instead of *to tax us*, read, *make laws for us?* And 2d Paragraph, line 7, put a Period after *fears*; and next line, change the period into a comma.



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THE  
CASE OF  
GREAT BRITAIN  
AND  
AMERICA:

THE affairs of Great Britain and her Colonies are at a crisis. If our justice or our moderation dictate to us the making any concessions, they should be made whilst they can yet be *imputed* to our moderation or our justice. The present Session of Parliament should determine upon some permanent system in this point. Great Britain should fix the Pretensions which she will never relinquish, and the Colonies should have certain information of those claims which they must submit to. Until such a system be resolved upon, there will be irresolution on the one side, and repugnance on the other; and no system can  
B be

be stable that is not founded upon equity and wisdom.

It is the resolution of the present Ministry, it is said, to impose taxes upon the Colonies, by the authority of the British Parliament, and to *compel* the Colonies to submission. To examine the justice and the policy of those measures, and to suggest others, which appear to me less exceptionable, in each of those particulars, is my object.

The Colonies, by their respective Charters, have not uniformly the same privileges, or the same constitution. But though they differ in many particulars, they are alike in the following ; namely, That the inhabitants of every one of them have a right to tax themselves by their representatives, in their provincial assemblies ; that none of them vote for representatives in the British Parliament ; and that all of them are to enjoy the freedom of British subjects. In the search for arguments against the Americans, the validity of those charters has not passed unquestioned. I shall say, however, but a little in their support, as the attacks have been very weak and very few. From the earliest times down to the present, the disposition of foreign territory belonging to Great Britain

Britain has always been vested in the Executive. It is a power which the Restoration and the Revolution have left unshaken. From the cession of Tangier to that of Guadaloupe, how frequently has it been exercised? And in the particular instance of Gibraltar, it was necessary to pass a law to restrain it. \* If then the Crown, at the time when it granted the charters, could have ceded the territory of America to a foreign power, could it not have fixed the terms on which its present and future inhabitants should continue the subjects of Great Britain? Where it could have relinquished *all* the authority possessed by Great Britain, certainly it could relinquish a *part* of that authority. Where it could make a *total alienation* to enemies even, surely it could make a *modified grant* to subjects. But suppose that the Crown had not been legally possessed of that power, is there not a term after which uninterrupted possession confers a right? Have not the Colonists possessed their charters much longer than that term? Have they not dedicated their lives and fortunes to the improvement of that country, from a dependance upon the validity of their title? Have not the British Parliament seen

\* At present it is unalienable from Great Britain.

and acquiesced in their doing so? Has not Great Britain, in her exclusive trade, received a valuable consideration? Surely then it would be monstrous injustice to deprive them of rights so purchased and so confirmed. It has also been urged by some, that the Parliament can *revoke* these charters when it shall think proper; for that it can take away from any city or corporate town, in England, its charter, notwithstanding any length of time it may have enjoyed it. I answer, that if an English city or corporate town had so purchased their charter, as the Colonists have purchased theirs, and had so long possessed it, it would be unjust in the Parliament to rescind or violate it. But the comparison is totally unfair; for the charter of an English city or corporate town, and those of the Colonies, besides other material differences, have this essential one, that the former give a Right of representation in the British Parliament, and that the latter do not. If therefore the charter of a British city or borough be rescinded by Parliament, it is rescinded in an assembly which is the representative of that city or borough. Where a part of England only is concerned, the legislature of England may claim unlimited power, as a body to which all the rights of Englishmen are made over and intrusted. But the charters of America are  
agree-

agreements made between England on the one part, and the Colonies on the other. The House of Commons of England is the representative of one of the contracting parties only, namely England; and therefore cannot act for both. They have none of them any share in electing it; it cannot therefore legislate for them. It is a party, and cannot therefore be a judge.

The opponents of the Americans admit, that they are intitled to the privileges of British subjects; that they are a free people. Could we determine what these privileges are, and what this freedom, the dispute would be at an end. The American asserts, that he is deprived of the most essential privilege of a Briton, and a free man, if the colony to which he belongs can be taxed by an assembly in which it is not represented. The advocate for administration, answers, that there are many natives of Great Britain herself who are not represented; for that there are many who have not votes in the choice of representatives, and that the Colonists have no cause to complain, when they are in the same condition as *many* of the natives of Great Britain. Would a Colony pretend to a better constitution than the mother country, from whence she derives it? As this argument has been frequently repeated,

peated, I suppose it to be a favourite one with administration; and as it is the only method that has been tried to reconcile their assertion, that "the British Parliament has a right to tax the Colonies," with their concessions, that the Colonists have the privileges of Britons, and are a free people; let us listen to an American pleading his own cause, in answer to this argument: "I do not claim a better constitution than my mother country: you have misrepresented my claims. I have said that a right of suffrage in the choice of our representatives is the most essential of British privileges; but I have *not* said, that *every* Briton enjoys that Right; nor do I require that every Colonist should enjoy it. There are many Britons who have no vote in the election of the House of Commons, so are there many Colonists who have no vote in the election of our *provincial* representatives; I alledge, if you will, that in being taxed by your Parliament, you are taxed by an *imperfect* representative; in being taxed by our *provincial* assemblies, we are taxed by a representative *as* imperfect. Our freedom therefore, in point of taxation, when we are taxed by our *own* assemblies, is not greater than yours; it is only equal to it; our constitution is an image of yours. But if we are to be taxed by your Parliament, our constitution

“stitution no longer resembles yours, and our  
 “freedom is annihilated. If there be many  
 “Britons who have *not* a vote in the choice  
 “of their representatives, there are also many  
 “that *have*. The possession of a 40 s. free-  
 “hold, in Britain, confers the privilege of a  
 “vote : the possession of the whole continent  
 “of America, does not confer that privilege.  
 “Do you not know the infinite difference  
 “between a nation where *all* have *not* the  
 “power of voting for their representatives,  
 “and a nation where *none* have that power ?  
 “The former is *your* condition, and there-  
 “fore you are a free people ; the former is  
 “what we claim ; the latter is the condition  
 “of slaves, and that is what you offer. We  
 “claim the right of suffrage, as the privileges  
 “of Britons, and you tell us we have it, be-  
 “cause we are like those Britons who have it  
 “*not* ! We claim the same constitution as  
 “Great Britain, and you offer us only the *de-*  
 “*fect* of that constitution, but deny us its *ad-*  
 “*vantages*. England cannot be taxed but by  
 “an assembly, where her land is represented  
 “by Knights, her monied interest by Citizens  
 “and Burgeſſes, and therefore ſhe is a free  
 “nation. Is then America on a par with  
 “England, in point of Freedom ? if ſhe can  
 “be taxed by an Aſſembly, to which her free-  
 “holders ſend *no* Knights, and her cities *no*  
 “Citizens. You ſay that your right of ſuf-  
 “frage



“ frage is partially distributed, in Britain ; give  
 “ us then a right of suffrage *as* partially distri-  
 “ buted, in America. For this representation,  
 “ partial and imperfect as you call it, your  
 “ Magna Chartas have been demanded, your  
 “ patriots have bled, and your monarchs have  
 “ been dethroned. Was this for nothing ?  
 “ yet this you deny to the Americans, though  
 “ you say to us, Ye have the privileges of  
 “ Britons.”

“ But there is yet another defect in your  
 “ argument. For it is not true that we are in  
 “ *as good* a condition as those Britons whom  
 “ you call unrepresented, and who are not  
 “ electors : for even *they* have this great ad-  
 “ vantage, that both the representative and  
 “ the electors pay a part of the tax, as well  
 “ as those who have no suffrage : whereas if  
 “ the House of Commons of England should  
 “ tax the Americans, neither the representa-  
 “ tives nor the electors would pay any propor-  
 “ tion of what they imposed upon us ; they  
 “ would not tax, but *untax* themselves. The  
 “ condition therefore of an Englishman who  
 “ has no suffrage, when taxed by the Bri-  
 “ tish legislature, and of an American taxed  
 “ by the same authority, are totally diffi-  
 “ milar. Place them in situations which  
 “ bear *any* similitude, and it will shew  
 “ in the strongest light, the injustice of  
 “ the present measures. Suppose then that  
 “ the Parliament of Britain should impose  
 “ a tax,



“ a tax, from which themselves and those  
 “ who voted for them should be exempt-  
 “ ed, and which should be paid entirely by  
 “ those who had no suffrages; this would bear  
 “ *some* resemblance to their taxing the Ame-  
 “ ricans; and would not this be unparalleled  
 “ injustice? But if even this (unjust as you  
 “ must esteem it) were the practice of your Par-  
 “ liament, the condition of a non-voting Eng-  
 “ lishman would still be infinitely preferable to  
 “ ours; for even such a tax as I have stated,  
 “ would fall upon the relations, the friends,  
 “ the dependants, the tenants, the manufac-  
 “ turers, the labourers of British legislators.  
 “ The legislator would feel its effects, almost  
 “ instantaneously, he would find his own in-  
 “ terest immediately concerned; he would  
 “ therefore use some moderation. Besides,  
 “ he is an eye-witness of their condition, he  
 “ can judge of their abilities, he can be  
 “ wounded at the sight of their distresses.  
 “ But he cannot see our misery, he cannot  
 “ judge of our abilities; and his tenants and  
 “ his manufacturers will feel the *immediate*  
 “ effects of our ruin, not in their distress, but  
 “ in their exoneration. If therefore the legi-  
 “ slature of Britain should adopt such a system  
 “ of unparalleled injustice, with respect to the  
 “ non-voting inhabitants of Britain, yet, even  
 “ the sufferers by, and the objects of that in-  
 “ justice, would be happy, in comparison of  
 “ us. Suppose, for a moment, if you can

“ bear the thought, suppose for a moment,  
 “ that your House of Commons were not  
 “ elected by you, that they were an hereditary  
 “ body, in no wise indebted to your choice ;  
 “ would you not be an enslaved and an un-  
 “ happy people : but even then you would be  
 “ happier than we are. A body of 500 men,  
 “ situated in the midst of seven millions, and  
 “ taxing those seven millions, would surely be  
 “ more bound to moderation, by fear, if not  
 “ by principle, than the same body, assisted and  
 “ supported by those seven millions, in taxing  
 “ two millions who are at a distance. To op-  
 “ press, in one instance, would at least be in-  
 “ famy, if it would not be punishment ; in  
 “ the other they might find it popularity, they  
 “ might think it patriotism. Mr. P---tt said,  
 “ (if I mistake not) that every man in Eng-  
 “ land could huzza at an election : even that  
 “ method of expressing one’s wishes, is some  
 “ satisfaction, and has some influence ; the  
 “ shoutings of the people have had great ef-  
 “ fects ; and the very murmurs of Englishmen,  
 “ had perhaps more share in the repeal of the  
 “ stamp act, than the united voice of Ame-  
 “ rica. We cannot even *huzza* at a British  
 “ election !

“ The right of presenting petitions to par-  
 “ liament was deemed of so much importance,  
 “ that it was inserted in the Bill of Rights.  
 “ In this fundamental right, the bulwark against  
 “ parlia-

“ parliamentary oppression, as well as every  
 “ other, under what disadvantages should we  
 “ labour, if you were to tax us? How different  
 “ is the effect of a petition presented by the  
 “ hands of the injured, enforced by their assidu-  
 “ ity, and recommended by their tears, from  
 “ that of our paper-representations? They are  
 “ subject to be misrepresented in a thousand ways.

“ They come cold, and you do not feel them;  
 “ often too late, and you cannot comply with  
 “ them; and what was done by you through  
 “ inattention and mistake, must be maintained  
 “ *for dignity*; in a word, they do not strike  
 “ home, either upon your caution or your  
 “ kindness, your affections or your fears in this  
 “ particular. The very women and children  
 “ of England, have an influence upon Parlia-  
 “ ment, of which the Americans are destitute.  
 “ How different is your lot from ours! In  
 “ the character of an American, to the people  
 “ of England I speak. Your frequent elec-  
 “ tions are a valuable privilege to you; what  
 “ privilege are they to us? At the close of  
 “ a Parliament, you expect popular measures,  
 “ from the fears and the hopes of your repre-  
 “ sentatives. But who will find it his interest  
 “ to be a friend to America? They will wish  
 “ to gain the favour of their countrymen, and  
 “ therefore will burthen America, in order to  
 “ disburthen England. What to you is a va-  
 “ luable privilege, will be to us a source of

“ repeated oppression. We are worse even  
 “ than your Papists. In being excluded from  
 “ the right of suffrage, they are like us; and  
 “ as they pay double land-tax, in that *addi-*  
 “ *tional* payment the resemblance continues;  
 “ for it is a tax imposed by men whom they  
 “ had no share in electing, and it is a tax  
 “ which those who impose it do not pay. But  
 “ this disability in point of suffrage, and this  
 “ *additional* payment, are penalties inflicted on  
 “ your Papists; and why? Allegiance as by  
 “ law required is a quality essential to being a  
 “ subject. Your Papists are defective in that  
 “ quality. They are considered as not com-  
 “ pletely subjects, and, as such, penalties are  
 “ inflicted on them. Your only justification  
 “ for inflicting these penalties on them, is that  
 “ you doubt their being subjects. Your only  
 “ pretence for inflicting the same penalties on  
 “ us, is that we are subjects. *Same* penalties, did  
 “ I say, nay worse; for as they are inflicted on us,  
 “ without offence, we cannot by a discontinu-  
 “ ation of offence, exempt ourselves from these  
 “ grievances. The Papist, by becoming a Pro-  
 “ testant, can free himself from this disability,  
 “ and this double taxation: but we cannot  
 “ free ourselves from this misery, but by ceasing  
 “ to be Americans. Besides, in every other  
 “ case, except that addition of land-tax, your  
 “ Papists are in as good a situation as any of  
 “ the rest of your inhabitants who have not  
 “ votes: but in *every* tax you lay upon us,  
 “ we

“ we are in as bad a situation as your Papists  
 “ are in that one. Besides, your Papists are  
 “ connected with their legislators, by rela-  
 “ onship, friendship, neighbourhood, or de-  
 “ pendance. Their possessions too are Bri-  
 “ tish, and they must have influence, tho’  
 “ they have not votes. And the great right  
 “ of petitioning, they possess, with all its  
 “ advantages, and can enforce their petitions  
 “ by their presence, their assiduity, their  
 “ numbers, and their tears. In how much  
 “ worse a situation are we than your Papists,  
 “ whom for their obstinacy in an unconstitu-  
 “ tional and persecuting religion, you have  
 “ made the outcasts of legislation. What  
 “ then is the freedom, and what are those  
 “ British privileges, to which you confess  
 “ we are entitled? What are those rights  
 “ which we have possessed above an hun-  
 “ dred years, which we derived from so-  
 “ lemn compact, which we have purchased  
 “ by an unshaken allegiance, and by the  
 “ profits of our trade?”

In this reply, which I have put into the  
 mouth of a Colonist, I have examined, pretty  
 minutely, the real extent of American liberty,  
 under the present measures. I have shewn  
 the *dissimilarity* of their condition to our  
 own, and to that of a free people. I shall  
 now shew the similarity of their condition  
 to that of those nations whom we call slaves.

The

The author of the Letter to Lord Hillsborough, says, " *Libertas recipit magis et minus*, that there are degrees of freedom." I allow it. In what does perfect political liberty consist? Some authors define it to be, "the power of doing what the laws permit." If I do not mistake the meaning of this definition, it is clearly erroneous. To do what the laws of Turkey permit, certainly is *not* liberty. Perfect political liberty consists rather,---in the not being subject to any laws, but such as we have consented to by ourselves, or by our representatives. If Britain is but imperfectly represented, it has but an imperfect freedom. But considering the imperfection of every thing human, it may well boast of the excellence of its constitution. There are other nations, the lives and fortunes of whose inhabitants are dependant upon the will of some person whom they do not elect, and whom they cannot remove; or upon some other country, in the government of which they have no share. France, Spain, and Turkey are instances of the first; Corsica, while it was under the yoke of Genoa, of the second. All such governments are absolute or despotic, and the people subject to them we call enslaved. Between their situation and our own, there are indeed many degrees. But I defy the author of the letter to Lord Hillsborough, to shew, that any of those degrees would be  
enjoyed



enjoyed by the Americans, if measures should be carried to the extremes which we now hear of. I do not say that there is *not* a medium, between a good constitution, and simple despotism; but I say the Americans would not *possess* that medium. He objects to the advocates for America, their asserting, "That if dependance be enforced in any the least degree, the Colonists are slaves." Let him not object it to me; my assertion is that they are slaves, if the British Parliament assumes unlimited power over them, *in every particular whatsoever*. If a people can be deprived of their lives and their property, by another person, or another nation, is it not evident that such a people is not free? whether it be by a nation, or by a monarch, is not material. The masters indeed are different, but the *government* is equally despotic. The Helots of Sparta were as much slaves, as the subjects of the Grand Signior. Now I defy any person to mention one single power, which the Spartan republic assumed over the Helots, which England does not assume over her Colonies. I would not insinuate that Great Britain will not govern with greater humanity: but if her power be mildly administered, it will indeed be a *milder* despotism, but it will not therefore be *the less* a despotism. Should we thus address ourselves to a colony of France or Spain: You live under an absolute government;

transfer

transfer your allegiance to us, and you shall enjoy those privileges which Great Britain diffuses through all her dominions. Might it not answer us in these words; “ I am not burthened with taxes in near so great a proportion as your Colonists, but I would consent to pay more than I do, if I were to enjoy a greater degree of freedom. What then are those privileges which you offer to me? We might say to them, One of the principal privileges shall be this, that you shall not be taxed, except by your own representatives, or else by the Parliament of Britain. Might they not then reply to us? I find then that my representatives are not to be a part of that British Parliament which is to tax me; were I subject to the absolute dominion of an assembly elected by the provinces and cities in France, should I be one whit more free, than in being subject to the absolute dominion of its monarch? When you spoke to me of privileges, I imagined that you meant that right of suffrage, which is the boast of the British constitution. You give it to me indeed, in one place, but you will tax me in a place where you will not give it to me. When our own Sovereign has taxed his subjects as much as he thinks proper, he will scarcely refuse them the privilege of taxing themselves again, in any manner they please. If you can demonstrate to me that our monarch assumes one single



power over us, which you do not assume over your Colonies, I will hearken to your proposals, but if you cannot, your government is as arbitrary as that of France, we are less taxed, and as free as your Colonies.

Having examined the real condition of the Colonists, under the present supposed measures, with as much attention as I am capable of, I can find in it no circumstance, which should prevent my asserting that they would be as destitute of freedom, as any nation ever was, or ever can be: now whatever those rights and privileges may consist in, which confessedly belong to the Americans, they certainly do *not* consist in *slavery*, which is the want of every right, and the deprivation of every privilege.

I have shewn that the comparison between the Americans and those Britons who have no suffrages, is false; and that if it were true, it would not be argumentative. I have shewn what the freedom of the Americans does *not* consist in, and I will now endeavour to shew what *are* those privileges which for our own sakes we must allow them. I cannot help observing in this place, that every one who has written against them, has confined his endeavours to the proving

D which

which of the British privileges they ought *not* to possess; but not one of them has mentioned those privileges which they *ought* to enjoy. It is a little suspicious that those authors whose profest design is to convince and to conciliate the Colonists, have never once enumerated those advantages which they are still to enjoy under parliamentary government. Surely nothing would be so likely to pacify them, as a recital of the blessings which are still to remain to them.

But to return; in order that the Americans should enjoy British freedom, it is not sufficient that they should adopt *that part only* of our constitution, which *departs* from the principles of British liberty. They must possess that part which is excellent, as well as that part which is defective, or their liberty is not an image of ours. It is not therefore sufficient that an American land-holder should be on a par with a Briton who has no landed property, or with a British Papist. But that an American *freeholder* should have the same power over his *own* property, as a *British* freeholder has over *his own*. If any man shall object to me, that I have placed the Colonies in a situation *too* equal to their mother-country; I answer him, that I have done so, only with respect to their *own*  
*vested*

*vested and acquired* property \*; and that Americans have as much right to the property of America, when once *acquired and vested*, as *Britons* have to the property of *Great Britain*.

In order that taxation and representation may not be united in America, the adversaries of America deny that they were united in Britain. And attempts have been made to produce instances of their disunion, taken from different periods of the British constitution. It is not material to my cause, to examine whether those attempts have succeeded. If America be entitled to English privileges, the English constitution, she is entitled to that constitution, as it stood at the *time* when the Colonies were planted. She is not to have the constitution that existed in the time of William the Conqueror, or of the Saxon heptarchies, or of the Roman government. If England communicated to America her constitution and her privileges, we communicated them such as she herself at that time enjoyed. It was the constitution

\* The Americans must relinquish many rights of property; that is, many rights of *acquiring* property; for they must be subject to British navigation laws, and trade-regulations: but the right of *granting* property already acquired and vested, should be sacred. This should be theirs safe and intire.

of England at that period, that every man possessed of 40*s.* a year, by that free tenure which we call a freehold, should have a vote in electing a member of that assembly which alone could tax his property; besides certain persons invested with privileges in cities and boroughs. This was and is the bulwark of English liberty; without this we should be slaves. This then is the constitution which is communicated to America: let not therefore *her* property be taxed, except in an assembly to which *her* freeholders and electors send a representative. In the Saxon constitution, the privilege of voting was diffused much more universally; it belonged to all who held by a free tenure; that is, to all the *subjects* of England; for those who hold by other tenures were not subjects, but vilani, or slaves. So entire was the union at that time, between representation and taxation: but to this constitution the Colonists have no pretension, as it was not the constitution of England at the time of their establishment. By the 8th of Hen. VI. the right of voting was confined to such freeholders as had 40*s.* a year, and thus the more opulent freeholders were entrusted with the rights of all the rest. It appears to me that England by this change had *two* kinds of representatives. The richer freeholders represented the *others*, and the House of  
Com-

Commons represented *them*. Thus the opulent freeholders were *representatives of election* constituted by their circumstances; and the knights were *representatives of legislation*, appointed by suffrage. If there be any justice in this opinion, all the *subjects* of England were either actually or virtually represented. But if there be not, and if it be admitted that England was and is *partially* represented—Give a representation *as partial* to her Colonies. If Britain be imperfectly represented, she has but an *imperfect* freedom; but if the Colonies have *no* representation, they have no freedom at all. If Britain has *not* the *best* constitution, which human invention could have suggested; is it a reason that America should have the *worst*?

In the memorable contest with the H——e of P——rs about the right of originating taxes, the C——ns urged with great force their exclusive right to that privilege. They thought it unreasonable, even that any part of the taxes should be encreased or diminished, or that the rates should be examined by the P——rs, “whose proportion in all taxes, in comparison to what the commonalty pay, is very inconsiderable.” I believe the same assembly think these words to contain good sense at this day; and it is undoubtedly very reasonable, that these who  
give

give the most, should have the greatest share in modelling the gift. Such were the maxims that were formerly adopted by that great assembly, and such were the reasonings on which their greatest privilege is established. Why then do they *now* think it reasonable, that those who pay not an *inconsiderable*, but *no* proportion, should not only originate a tax, but pass it into a law. Compare the spirit of their former maxims, with that of their present. “ It is unjust in you, my L—ds, to *begin* a taxation, of which you pay only a small proportion.” Yet we will *impose* a tax upon America, of which we pay no proportion at all. “ It is unjust that you, my L—ds, should even *originate* a tax upon men, of whom you are but the lesser number, though the rest may afterwards refuse it if they please.” But it is just for us to enact a tax-law for the Colonists, which they shall *not* have a power to refuse, although we are not any part of them. “ The right of proposing taxes belongs to us as representatives of the people who pay them, and yet we will tax a people of whom we are *not* representatives. Bills of supply are looked upon, not only as laws; but as free gifts; and, on account of this difference in their natures, they are subject to different forms. The lords cannot originate them, although they also are *legislators*:

And it is not the royal *assent*, which is given, but the royal *thanks*. The 9th of Henry 7th, enacts, that the King shall *thank* both Lords and Commons: but if our Parliament shall tax the Colonists, to whom are the r——I thanks to be addressed? Is he to thank his *British* subjects, for giving him the property of the *Colonists*. Is he to thank the English, for money which they do not pay, or the Americans, for a *free gift*, wrested from them against their will? Which of these mockeries would be most unworthy the great scene on which they are to be acted?

Much declamation has been used, on both sides. The English speak of the blood and treasure they have expended. The Americans, that they have encountered an inhospitable climate for the purposes of Great Britain, and have dedicated their lives and fortunes, to her service. There is no weight in any of these declamations. Whatever was done by either of them, was done for their own advantage. If Britain has protected the property of America, it does not constitute her the owner of that property. She has, for her own sake, protected in their turns, almost every country in Europe, but that does not make her the proprietor of those countries, or give her a power of taxation over them. If America, in pursu-  
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ing her own interest, has advantaged Britain, we owe her no obligation. Whilst we each possess those benefits for which we expended our treasure, and for which they encountered that climate, we owe nothing to each other, but reciprocal affection. To extend their commerce, our ancestors encouraged the emigration of British subjects. Their industry abroad was thought more advantageous, than their residence in Britain. As an inducement to forego those privileges which they possessed, or might acquire at home, it was agreed that they should carry English privileges along with them. And as an inducement to become the carriers, and the labourers of England, they were endowed with a desert territory, useful only by the industry they should bestow upon it, and this was given to them, as their *wages*. Let not a compact, founded in our interest, purchased by their labour, and confirmed by time, suffer any violation. Let us be content with our commercial advantages, and those superiorities which they willingly submit to. Let us make them labour for us; but let us not take from them their *wages*, *alio*.

Having considered the justice of the present measures; let us now examine their policy; and in this examination, let our sentiments



ments of equity forget to operate. Let us forget that they have rights, or that we have humanity. Let us suppose ourselves entering into an agreement, with a *free* and a *considerable* people, and settling the terms of an everlasting union. Or if any one should be of opinion, that neither of these circumstances is applicable to the Colonies; let us suppose them in their numbers inconsiderable, unaccustomed to liberty, overawed by fear, or humiliated by conquest, and ready to receive any constitution, we please to impose upon them. In such a situation, what reflections should our own interest suggest to us? Though this people be weak, at present, their strength and their numbers may increase \*; though we ourselves are strong, our strength may decline; though their spirit is depressed, it may revive. They are placed at a great distance from us. We have formidable enemies. Their affections therefore, are of the utmost importance, and there is no method so certain of securing their affections, as the making it their *interest* to be our friends. We ourselves have a free constitution: if we

\* It is whimsical that Mr. Canning mentions the probable increase of the Americans, as an argument for measures, that must exasperate them.

grant liberty to them, they will be steady to us, because they cannot change for the better : if we assume unlimited and absolute authority, they will wish to change, because they cannot change for the worse. The tyranny of a despotic commonwealth is infinitely worse than that of a despotic Prince. But it is vain to endeavour to deceive them ; though they never have tasted liberty, they will soon become acquainted with its nature. They will perceive the *misery* of their situation, by the happiness of *ours*. While their garrisons are filled with our soldiers, their harbours with our fleets, and their employments with officers of our appointment, and while they derive from us a degree of freedom, we shall be secure, both by our own power, and by their affections. They are weak, by their circumstances, let us not make them strong, by their despair. The gradual increase of numbers and of opulence, may add to their force, but that force will sleep, unless it be awakened by injury : and while we retain an absolute power over their trade, that very increase will depend upon our regulations. Whilst they are happy under our government, their strength and their opulence will be strength and opulence to us ; but, if we oppress them, they will be our weakness, and

and our danger. The numbers of a people are not so formidable, as their union, their hatred, their fury. If there ever should come a time when they shall be able to shake off our sovereignty, it will pass unheeded, by a grateful and happy people. But if our dominion be founded *only* in *our* strength, it will subsist no longer than *their* weakness. It is therefore evident that we shall hold America, by a better security, if we do not enslave it. But will it afford us as much present emolument? This surely is a consideration, much inferior to the other; it may have more weight with a short-lived and a short-sighted administration; but can never have so much with a thinking nation. Yet let even this be considered; we know that this nation has paid considerable taxes, without any compulsion; and we know that free nations can support greater burdens, than nations equally opulent, that are enslaved. No power, no management, has ever succeeded to tax the latter, as highly as the first; and the efforts of despotism have produced only depopulation or rebellion. Thus it is by no means certain, that even our present emoluments would be the less, if we extort nothing from them against their own consent \*. Besides, with how much less *ex-*

\* In the last war they incurred a debt of 2,600,000*l.* Would they have done this, for an oppressor?

*pence* can we secure the allegiance of the willing, than of the unwilling. Amongst the first, a militia would be serviceable; amongst the latter, it would be formidable to ourselves. Let us also consider with how much greater eagerness our manufactures will be purchased, by a grateful, than by an exasperated people. We are now at peace with the world; the most rigorous measures may succeed, for the present; but such measures are not the most eligible in themselves, when conducive neither to present advantage, nor future security. The greatest man of his age has told us, that two millions of fellow-subjects, deprived of their liberty, would be fit instruments to make slaves of the rest. Surely there is justice in his observation; those whom we reduce to *slavery*, cannot wish well to our *freedom*. Let us also consider, that without assuming that despotic authority, which is intolerable to human nature, we may yet retain a power amazingly extensive. A power over the commerce of a nation, affects the merchant, the landholder, and the manufacturer. Tho' we cannot dive into their purses, to wrest from them what they have *already* acquired, we can prevent their *future* acquisitions. Nay, we can do more; we can make what they possess already, less valuable by its stagnation,

nation. Though the power of *granting*, belongs solely to themselves, they will yet have but little power to *refuse*. Let this content us : that the sea, the common benefit of mankind, may be denied them, that the labour of their hands, the strength and the ingenuity which nature has bestowed upon them, shall be converted to our purposes ; but, for our own sakes, let us not discourage that industry which is to benefit ourselves : what we permit them to acquire, let that be their own.

Thus, on every present, and every future consideration, I should think myself an enemy to Great Britain, should I propose to give worse terms to a people unendeared by former connections, unacquainted with liberty, and destitute of any claim upon our justice, than those which are demanded for *our fellow subjects*. But it must not therefore be forgotten, that they have long been our friends and brothers ; and that another system cannot be established, without a violation of national faith, a departure from our justice, and, at one time perhaps, the shedding of their blood. We should be well assured of the rectitude of our cause, we should advance to the utmost limits of negotiation, before we draw the sword, against our brothers.

thers. We shall prevail, with certainty, indeed, but we may not prevail, without a contest. And though the force of terror only, may give temporary establishment to our authority, the sword and the executioner only, must maintain it. From men deprived of every thing that they hold most dear, and deprived of it by their friends, what may not be expected? Any thing should be expected, except their submission. What then are the ultimate objects of the most oppressive laws, and most sanguinary councils? Will they restore us to that brotherly affection, which infused the same soul into every part of our empire, or procure us an uncertain quiet, a disaffected submission? Let France expect *such* a submission, from Corsica; by our supineness she will obtain it: and she may well be contented with it. She is accustomed to govern by fear; and over a people where heretofore she had not authority, even that influence will become acquisition. But neither her numerous armies, nor her mighty power, nor her vicinity to that devoted island, nor the paucity of its inhabitants, can ensure to her a quiet and an useful possession, while she finds an enemy in the hearts of the people. But by us, if possible, still less is to be expected: with less disproportioned force, we may encounter



counter a more rooted antipathy. The Corsicans never tasted freedom, under a French administration ; she has only *prevented* their emancipation from the tyranny of Genoa, and will receive them under a milder oppression. But the Americans will be *deprived* of a liberty which they have already possessed many years, under the tutelage of Great Britain. A more violent change, a more intolerable perdition. And are these measures *wise*, whose very success has but this for their object, and whose failure is ruin? Are these the principles, by which free men should govern free men? Is this that invincible union, and that firm establishment, by which Britain shall hold the West Indies, in her right-hand, and the East, in her left ! Or is this the wisdom which must heal public credit of a thousand wounds, and support the weight of a tottering empire? There may come a time when the distresses of Great Britain may require the utmost efforts of a grateful people, and our posterity may find, by a fatal experience, that the sword was but an ill interpreter of charters ; and that the characters of freedom, will not be less indelible in the breasts of the Americans, if they be written in the blood of their forefathers. What shall I say of these measures? That they are so impolitic, that  
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we should reject them, though justice did not condemn them ; that they are so unjust, that we should reject them, were they ever so politic.

These considerations I have presumed to dedicate to the greatest assembly in the world, and to the best of princes. If they carry any conviction along with them, the consequences naturally follow. First, that we should leave the Americans to tax themselves: Secondly, that we should retain to the British Parliament, every power that is not inconsistent with our justice, and their liberty: That a law should be passed, immediately, repealing every act, that taxes the Colonies. I do not propose that it should contain any counter-declarations, or that the power should, in terms, be disclaimed. It will be sufficient that they be repealed, and that we do not revive the claim. \* *Let it be buried in oblivion ; let it hang between the constitutions of both countries, as belonging to neither. Let it be suspended, like the sword of the murderer, in the Grecian law, which was deposited in their temples, as unfit*

\* These words were made use of, upon a different occasion, by Mr. Flood, the brightest ornament of the Irish Parliament.



*to be handled; and consecrated, as it were, not for its merit, but offence."* And lest, at any time hereafter, it may be disputed where the line is drawn, between American liberty and British jurisdiction, perhaps it might not be improper to declare, in the same law, the supremacy of Britain, and its absolute dominion over navigation and commerce. Can we assert the dependency of the Colonists, in stronger terms than those of Mr. Otis, a Gentleman who is certainly well informed of their sentiments, and who has probably a considerable share in forming them, "That the Parliament of Great Britain has undoubted power, and lawful authority, to make acts for the general good, which by naming the Colonies, shall, and ought to be equally binding, as upon the subjects of Great Britain within the realm." Should the Colonists complain, that if this power be reserved, they have not the same degree of freedom, or all the privileges that are possessed by their British Brethren, I shall readily confess that they have not: but it was not intended, by their original compact, that they should. If Britain does not reserve to herself an absolute authority, over the trade of her Colonies, not one of the ends will be answered, for which those Colonies were planted: they will not

be subservient to the commerce of their mother-country ; they will rival and destroy it. And surely we shall not be deemed enemies of their freedom, in adopting the sentiments of its able and interested defender. The power of regulating their commerce, and the right of prohibition, have indeed a most extensive dominion, over the wealth and prosperity of America ; and those demands must be exorbitant, indeed, which can be refused to an assembly possessed of so mighty a prerogative. But there is a material difference, between stopping the acquisition of riches, and the taking away what is already acquired. They have all but a bitter alternative ; but bitter as it is, *they have an alternative*, says Mr. Otis, in the true spirit of liberty, “ I had rather see this  
 “ (right of prohibition) carried, with a high  
 “ hand, to the utmost rigour, than have a  
 “ tax of one shilling, taken from me, with-  
 “ out my consent.”

It is so much the interest of Britain, to promote the commercial welfare of her Colonies, that they may form a reasonable expectation, that these interests are safely deposited. But on this self-interest, on the wisdom and equity of the British legislature, and on the conciliating moderation of their own conduct, much, very much, of their  
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prosperity will depend. Of this moderation we have as yet made no trial. When we desisted from *actual* oppression, we laid its *future* foundations, and the repeal of the Stamp Act, was attended with the strongest assertions, of our *right* of taxation ; assertions which an upright administration never intended to carry into experiment, but an unhappy compliment, which wisdom and virtue paid to temporization and prejudice. If impressed with a conviction of their freedom, the Americans have a sense of injury, let not Britons resent the sentiments they have communicated. Let us maturely consider whether we ourselves were not the aggressors. If force is justifiable in destroying those rights, which are derived from time, from compact, and from nature ; what is not justifiable for their maintenance and support ? If the cause of the Americans be just, their firmness is virtue.

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